history, was generally based upon the Old Testament or Apocrypha when it was not upon the Passion or the Nativity of Jesus. The stories of Joseph and his Brethren, of Susannah, of the Deluge, of the Sacrifice of Isaac, were especially favoured: and it was from these simple representations that the modern stage emerged.[1]

This universal European practice was paralleled (to say "copied" would be to anticipate the answer to a question which has not yet been adequately examined) by the Jews in their Ghettoes. It was perhaps symbolic that, while among their neighbours these dramatic representations were associated especially with the seasons of greatest solemnity, among the Jews they took place above all at carnival-tide, at the feast of *Purim.* In these circumstances, it was inevitable that the story of Esther and Mordecai, commemorated at that season, was a specially favoured subject. However, there were others—the Sale of Joseph, David and Goliath, and so on. Precisely when this tradition started is uncertain.[2] Traces of it may be discerned in the Dark Ages, in the East; in the late Middle Ages, it took on a more elaborate development: and at the period of the Renaissance, the performances made by the Jews were famous, and attracted numerous Gentile spectators. Thus we are

[1] Hebraic echoes are to be discerned even in some of the Morality Plays. Thus the famous *Everyman* has its analogue in a familiar passage in the collection of Rabbinic apophthegms known as *The Ethics of the Fathers :* "When a man departs from this

world, there accompany him neither silver nor gold nor precious stones nor pearls, but only learning and good works". The thought is natural enough: but it is significant that in the English version (in which, incidentally, God is referred to as *Adonai)* "knowledge", corresponding to *Tor ah,* accompanies "good deeds"—a typically Hebraic conception, as it would seem. The more elaborate version of this contained in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eleazar* is even closer in spirit to the Morality Play, introducing the dramatic form.

[2] Jewish actors had of course been known even in classical times: Josephus mentions one, Alityros, who was a favourite with the Emperor Nero.